

Health Policy Committee Testimony Re: HB 4524. April 15, 2013.

As a physician, member of Michigan State Medical Society and Kent County Medical Society, I would like to voice my opposition to HB 4524 as unnecessary legislative overreach that will not solve the problems of healthcare provider confusion. Of particular concern is the mandate on what physicians wear in their own private offices.

HB 4524 mandates that physicians wear a state-approved photo identification with license type and expiration date, at all times, even in their private offices. The law's penalty for failure to wear the state-approved identification is on par with the licensing penalty for committing a felony, meaning it can result of loss of licensure. In addition to this law being heavy-handed, simply mandating photo identification at all times will not solve the very real problem we have of patient confusion over health care provider roles. Indeed, the vast majority of confusion comes in hospitals and urgent care settings, where providers are already wearing identification.

I'm sure there will be assurances that physicians will not lose their licenses for not wearing a photo ID. But why pass a law that will not be enforced? When laws are passed which sound good for press releases and radio interviews, but do not solve the problem and are not expected to be enforced, it's called political grandstanding. While there are many concerns I've had about laws passed in Lansing over the past few years, I've been proud of how our legislature has conducted itself in the way of rolling back unnecessary regulation and refusal to pass senseless laws just to look good. This bill is a profound disappointment. I am particularly disappointed with the Michigan State Medical Society for allowing our professional licensure laws to become breached and used in this political manner.

Patients have a right to know if they are seeing a doctor, nurse, PA or student. Our lawmakers can aid this effort by clarifying who may call themselves "Dr." in a medical setting, and provide clear recourse to report and sanction providers who are practicing outside their scope of training or intentionally misrepresenting their qualifications. Or, our lawmakers could consider a public education campaign to educate patients on the education, training, and scope differences between a doctor, nurse, nurse practitioner, PA. We can do better. There are better ways to solve this challenge that will empower and educate patients, rather than the current bill which unnecessarily punishes doctors.

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